

VP2E

PJ8DX

VP2EEC

VP2DX VP2VAN

K2FJ/KV4

Greetings Fellow Amateurs and SWL's,

After many Caribbean DX-peditions and over 11,000 QSO's, it was felt some of you may be interested in the places of operation, equipment used, problems, costs, etc., and a bit of personal background.

Since being "licenced" W2TMI in 1947 and then K2FJ, it was very difficult to understand why there were no pile-ups when I sent CQ using those exotic calls! So, in 1968 while on a Caribbean cruise with XYL Ann, we stopped at Curacao and I operated PJ3CC at Chet's Coral Cliff Hotel. You wouldn't believe the pile-ups with that call! It was so nice to be wanted.

After being elected as a Town Assessor on the Republican slate, it was found that the part-time income could be applied to the pursuit of my hobby, Amateur Radio. Plans were made and licenses obtained for a "SOLO" DX-cursion. In my case, DX operating and a wife are not compatible. I did feel a bit selfish, but this was quickly overcome by thoughts of the pile-ups!

The antenna used for all these trips was a Hustler Newtronics 4BTM trap vertical, with radials, and a top mounted RM-75 mobile loading coil unit for 75 meters. The first transceiver used was the SBE-34, then a Swan 270B, and finally a Yaesu FT-101B. With encouragement from Ralph, W1HGT; Stew, W1BB; and Bob, WA2MRZ to go 160 meters, I reluctantly spent over \$700 for a FT-101B. This, together with increased air fares, was a bit painful, to say the least. For 160 meters, an Inverted "V" was used, 35 feet up.

And now to those beautiful islands in the Caribbean.

K2FJ/KV4 - Operation for several days on St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands. Had pleasant visits with Clarence, KV4AB; Les, KV4EY; and Dick, KV4AA.

VP2VAN - BVI - License cost \$5. See CQ July 1972, page 76.

After a bouncing ride on a boat called the "Bomba Charger", I arrived at West End, Tortola, British Virgin Islands. Across the bay was Frenchman Cay, where operations took place. The 4BTM was strapped to an upper floor railing. With a rental Land Rover, much of the island was seen, with all its yachting marinas. Several British amateurs were visited. Tortola (dove island), the main island, is mountainous, but has beautiful beaches. One, Long Bay Beach, is where Ed, WB8LSD and Larry, WA8RXU recently operated VP2VBW. On my third trip, a very interesting SCUBA dive was made on a reef off Peter Island, BVI. This was a wonderful experience, and is another interest of mine, while resting from the pile-ups. Saw many poisonous black, spiny sea urchins. Just like pin cushions. Breaking them open with your knife allows you to view the beautiful-colored fish feeding on the urchins. The last operation was made from the Colonial Manor Hotel at Paraquita Bay. An ideal site, with the sea on 3 sides and no mountains blocking the path to the States. Three operating trips were made as VP2VAN.

PJ8DX - Sint Eustatius - Northern Netherland Antilles. License cost \$8 U.S. - See QST August 1972, page 97. This is a beautiful, green island, in what the Dutch call the Windward Islands. Maps show them as in the Leeward Island group. Regardless, the people are most friendly. Blessed with trade winds, the climate is very comfortable. Two operations took place from the Government Guest House in Oranjestad, with the vertical mounted on a high cistern. One day a wedding took place in the lounge, so DX work came to a halt for a couple hours. Eustatius was not well known on the air, as only 3 other known operators have ever transmitted from this 8.1 sq. mile island. Commercial communications are available through the Lands Radio Office. My friend Carl Lijfrock is in charge. On one visit, my son, daughter and I climbed to the summit and into the crater of an extinct volcano called "The Quill" (pit). This quiescent volcano can be seen from many miles away and identifies "Statia". With interest in the sea, I enjoyed some free diving with an islander last visit. Two lobster were snared, 2 fish speared, plus 1-1/2 hours of viewing the beautiful reefs off Statia. Amateur operation last trip took place from a private home. The trap vertical was

donated to Carl and left in place. Code practice sessions were held, and hopefully a PJ5 or two will be active from Statia in the near future. PJ8DX was signed on three different trips to St. Eustatius.

PJ8DX/PJ7 - For the Oct. 73 CQ WW SSB Contest, operation was moved to Philipsburg, Sint Maarten. This is another of the Northern Netherland Antilles and a popular tourist island. My friend Prof. John Irwin, K6SE/2 set up over on the French side of the island where he operated as FG0AFA/FS7. We operated both stations many hours on the same frequency and same island, but with different calls and different countries!

VP2EEC - Anguilla. License cost \$25 U.S. (This charge is way out of line with other Caribbean countries). This flat, 35 sq. mile island is formed of coral encrusted on volcanic debris. Some rich soil grows cabbage, corn and cotton. Mostly there is low scrub. It gets very little rainfall and is arid. The government is associated with the UK and is run by Her Majesty's Commissioner. The site chosen for this DX-pedition was Maunday's Bay Beach. Paul & Vera Randall operate a wonderful cottage set-up on a remote but beautiful beach. Sea shells abound, and some large ones were obtained skin diving. There is no coral to interfere with swimming. Just sand, shells, and that crystal clear water! No power mains are available, so a 4-1/2 KW diesel generator supplied power for the entire operating period of 9 days. Paul was very helpful in assisting with the vertical antenna erection on the sand beach, and my 160 meter inv. V. The cottages are on the beach & while talking with the many stations the surf can be heard only 60 feet away. The view of Maunday's Bay is magnificent! Even with the inconvenience of diesel generator maintenance and the high cost of fuel, this was truly the most wonderful place I have found for DX operating. The 3 abundant meals provided, the cooperation and friendliness of the Randall's, the climate, closeness of the sea, all added up to the greatest holiday I have ever enjoyed. As for operating, I arrived half-way thru the CQ WPX SSB Contest. After 5 days of constant pile-ups, my voice went bad. Medication was needed for a very sore throat. CW was then used. The Europeans were wild about working VP2E- Anguilla. One very embarrassing thing occurred. During one stretch of SSB operation I found I was getting fabulous reports but couldn't give out anything over S1 or S2. That is until I discovered the 20DB RF Attenuator was IN! Sorry. New rig you know. On 160 meters 57 QSO's were made. Heavy QRN. New country for many. My thanks to Vince, PJ7VL and Hud, K5JZN for directing me to this wonderful place - Maunday's Bay Beach Resort.

A short note now regarding the Bible verses seen on my QSL cards. Being a firm believer that a Supreme Being had to create such a wonderful Universe and the Life in it, I felt it proper and good that we think more on these things. In reading the Bible, it was found that there is an Eternal Life after our bodily death. God, the Creator, has given us the way to this Life; that is to believe and follow Jesus Christ. Check it out. It's so very important.

Some personal notes. I reside on a farm near Buffalo. Have 500 ft. long wire, ext. double-zepp and beam. Work as a TV broadcast eng. and born in '27. QCWA #7309 Niagara Frontier Chapter. Member Society of Wireless Pioneers. Former "sparks" in US Merchant Marine during and after WW2. Also US Army-K2USA.

Thanks for the QSL card/s. It's nice to confirm the island/s for you. It is an effort, an expensive one also, but certainly is enjoyable issuing out a "new country" on some band. All QSL's are answered. Hoping to work you again, maybe from a different location, I remain,

With best wishes,

Ken

Ken Palmer, K2FJ

P.S.-- If you hear K2FJ CQ'ing, please give me a call.
Space your calls.